WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. An anti-irritant composition comprising two or more water-soluble, organic salts of zinc, wherein said water-soluble, organic salts of zinc are present in said anti-irritant composition at concentrations between 0.1% and 2% (weight/weight), and further comprising water, ethanol, and one or more agent selected from the group consisting of a gelling agent, a thickening agent, a hydrophilic or hydrophobic polymer, an emulsifying agent, and an emollient.

2. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1, wherein the water-soluble, organic zinc salts are selected from the group consisting of zinc acetate, zinc butyrate, zinc citrate, zinc gluconate, zinc glycerate, zinc glycolate, zinc formate, zinc lactate, zinc picolinate, zinc proprionate, zinc salicylate, zinc tartrate and zinc undecylenate.

3. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1, wherein the concentration of water is between 10% and 80% (weight/weight).

4. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1, wherein the concentration of the emollient is between 0.3% and 10.0% (weight/weight).

5. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1, wherein the emollient is selected from the group consisting of one or more than one of PEG 20 almond glycerides, Probutyl DB-10, Glucam P-20, Glucam E-10, Glucam P-10, Glucam E-20, Glucam P-20 distearate, glycerin, propylene glycol, cetyl acetate, acetylated lanolin alcohol, cetyl ether, myristyril ether, hydroxylated milk glycerides, polyquaternium compounds, copolymers of dimethyl dialyl ammonium chloride and acrylic acid, dipropylene glycol methyl ethers, polypropylene glycol ethers, silicon polymers, petrolatum, mineral oil, lanolin, olive oil, cocoa butter, shea butter, cetyl lactate, lauryl lactate, isopropyl lanolate, 2-ethylhexyl salicylate, cetyl myristate, oleyl myristate, oleyl stearate, oleyl oleate, hexyl laurate, isohexyl laurate.

6. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1, wherein the concentration of the gelling or thickening agent is between 0.05% and 10.0% (weight/weight).

7. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 6, wherein the gelling and/or thickening agent is selected from the group consisting of one or more than one of cationic hydroxy ethyl cellulose, crothix, crodomol, zinc stearate, and behenyl alcohol.

8. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1 which further comprises between 0.1% and 1.0% (weight/weight) silicone polymer.

9. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 8, wherein the silicone polymer is selected from a group consisting of one or more than one of polydimethylsiloxane polymer, dimethiconol fluid in dimethicone, cyclomethicone and dimethicone copolyl, and silicone glycol.

10. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1 which further comprises an anti-microbial agent at a concentration of between 0.05% and 4% (weight/weight).

11. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 10, wherein the antimicrobial compound is selected from the group consisting of one or more than one of chlorhexidine gluconate, benzalkonium chloride, iodopropynylbutyl carbamate, phenoxyethanol, polymyxin B, neomycin, triclosan, parachlorometaxylene, incroquat and octoxyglycerin.

12. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1 which further comprises a stabilizing agent at a concentration of between 0.1% and 1.0% (weight/weight).

13. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 12, wherein the stabilizing agent is selected from the group consisting of one or more than one of antioxidants and surfactants.

14. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 13, wherein the antioxidant is selected from the group consisting of Vitamin C and Vitamin E.

15. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 13, wherein the surfactant is selected from the group consisting of incromide or a silicone-based surfactant.

16. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1, which further comprises one or more natural or synthetic chemicals selected from the group consisting of a monoterpene hydrocarbon, a sesquiterpene hydrocarbon, a monoterpene alcohol, a sesquiterpene alcohol, an ester, an ether, an aldehyde, a ketone, an oxide, almond oil, ylang-ylang oil, neroli oil, sandalwood oil, frankincense oil, peppermint oil, lavender oil, jasmine absolute, geranium oil bourbon, spearmint oil, clove oil, lemongrass oil, cedarwood oil, balsam oils, tangerine oil, l-citronellol, α-amylcinnamaldehyde, lyral, geraniol, farnesol, hydroxycitronellal, isoeugenol, eugenol, eucalypus oil, eucalyptol, lemon oil, linalool and citral.

17. The anti-irritant composition of Claim 1, which further comprises a synergistic amount of chlorhexidine gluconate, benzalkonium chloride and incroquat.

18. An anti-irritant composition comprising a synergistic amount of chlorhexidine gluconate, benzalkonium chloride and incroquat, and further comprising water, ethanol, and one or more agent selected from the group consisting of a gelling agent, a thickening agent, a hydrophilic or hydrophobic polymer, an emulsifying agent, and an emollient.

19. A method for decreasing irritation of the skin or mucous membranes of a subject comprising applying a therapeutically effective amount of an anti-irritant composition of Claim 1 to at least a portion of the skin or mucous membranes of the subject.

20. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritant causing the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is a physical irritant.

21. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritant causing the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is a chemical irritant.

22. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritant causing the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is a mechanical irritant.

23. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritant causing the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is a physical irritant.

24. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is caused by winter itch.

25. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is caused by winter itch.

26. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is caused by prickly heat.

27. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is caused by shaving.

28. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is caused by contact with poison ivy.

29. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is caused by psoriasis.

30. The method of Claim 19, wherein the irritation of the skin or mucous membrane is caused by the physical scratching or abrading of the skin or mucous membrane.